

Owyhee River Canyon Wilderness Study Area

1. The Study Area -- 225,680 acres

The Owyhee River Canyon WSA (ID-16-48B/OR-3-195) is located in Owyhee County, Idaho, and Malheur County, Oregon, about 90 miles southwest of Boise, Idaho. The WSA includes 34,980 acres of BLM land in Idaho and 190,700 acres of BLM land in Oregon (see Table 1). The BLM acreage includes 10,380 acres of split estate lands (federal surface and state subsurface) in Oregon and 1,280 acres acquired from the State of Idaho in 1987 after the area was designated as a WSA. There are 120 acres of private inholdings in Oregon.

Within Idaho, 82 percent of the WSA's 41-mile circumference is bounded by primitive dirt roads and fence lines, while the remainder is along nonfederal property lines. Within Oregon, 74 percent of the 178-mile circumference is bounded mostly by primitive dirt roads, gravel roads and water pipelines with service roads while the remainder is along nonfederal property lines. Five cherry-stem roads (20.3 miles) enter the WSA. The southeastern part of the WSA adjoins WSAs ID-16-49A, ID-16-48C and ID-16-53/NV-010-103A. The southern part adjoins WSAs OR-3-173 and OR-3-194.

The WSA consists of a flat to gently rolling sagebrush-, bitterbrush- and bunchgrass-covered plateau dissected by 126 miles of canyons including 74 miles of the Owyhee River, ten miles of the South Fork Owyhee River and 37 miles of the West Little Owyhee River. The canyons are 500 to 1,000 feet deep, narrow and meandering. Portions of the canyons that are not sheer-walled are covered with sagebrush and bunchgrasses while the riparian areas consist of narrow bands of lush grasses, rushes and sedges.

The WSA was studied under Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) and was included in the Owyhee Canyonlands Wilderness Environmental Impact Statement filed in October 1989. Two 640 acre inholdings acquired from the State of Idaho and 640 acres of recently acquired BLM land adjacent to the WSA were included in the study process under the authority granted in Section 202 of FLPMA.

Five alternatives were analyzed in the EIS for the WSA: a partial wilderness alternative where 187,660 acres of BLM land (including the 1,920 acres studied under the authority of Section 202 of FLPMA) would be designated as wilderness and 38,660 acres would be released for nonwilderness uses, which is the recommendation of this report; two additional partial wilderness alternatives where 47,540 and 148,990 acres would be designated as wilderness, and 178,140 and 77,330 acres, respectively, would be released for nonwilderness uses; an all wilderness alternative; and a no wilderness alternative where about 2,880 acres in Idaho would be added to the 20,800 acres of the Owyhee River Canyon in Oregon designated as a national wild river.

2. Recommendation and Rationale

**187,660 acres recommended
for wilderness (Idaho -- 35,620
acres; Oregon -- 152,040 acres)**

**38,660 acres recommended
for nonwilderness (Idaho -- 0;
Oregon -- 38,660 acres)**

The recommendation for the Owyhee River Canyon WSA is to designate 187,660 acres as wilderness and release the 38,660 acres for uses other than wilderness. The environmentally preferable alternative is the all wilderness alternative. It would cause the least change from the natural environment in the long term. The recommendation would use all practical means to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts.

The 187,660 acres recommended for wilderness are shown as the nonshaded area on the Owyhee River Canyon Proposal map. This acreage includes 8,440 acres of split estate lands (federal surface and state subsurface) in Oregon. This recommendation would further apply to 2,640 acres of state and 920 acres of private land adjacent to the WSA in Oregon if acquired through purchase or exchange with willing owners. Appendix I lists the nonfederal land within the area recommended for wilderness and provides additional information on the acquisition of these lands.

The 187,660 acres recommended for wilderness designation would enhance the National Wilderness Preservation System through the addition of 126 miles of spectacularly scenic canyon and 140,120 acres of surrounding plateau. The area is natural in appearance, has outstanding opportunities for solitude and for primitive and unconfined recreation, and offers significant special features. The area is manageable to protect wilderness characteristics over the long term with a minimum of resource conflicts. The 187,660 acres recommended for designation are a portion of a proposed 385,080 acre Owyhee Canyonlands Wilderness which would include about 270 miles of desert canyon, 164 miles of whitewater boating opportunities and 292,640 acres of plateau.

The 640 acres of BLM land adjacent to the WSA acquired from the State of Idaho in 1987 contain high quality wilderness values and were included within the area recommended for designation to provide a more definable and manageable wilderness boundary.

The 38,660 acres of BLM land in Oregon, in six separate tracts, were not recommended for wilderness designation because of potential conflicts with other resource uses of the area and to exclude land that would detract from the management of the area. The six tracts include:

AREA A: Toppin Creek -- 32 acres in the south-central portion of the WSA contains a plateau area lacking in diversity, quantity and quality of wilderness values. It is nearly separated from the rest of the WSA by an interior cherry-stem road important for livestock management. Numerous impacts on natural quality occur in the area include 24 miles of ways, six miles of fence, 12 reservoirs and a cabin. It has proposals for brush-control projects and nine additional miles of fence. Livestock utilization of existing forage is relatively low and increases in use are proposed. The area is judged to be extremely important for livestock grazing and for more intensive livestock management than would be allowed in wilderness.

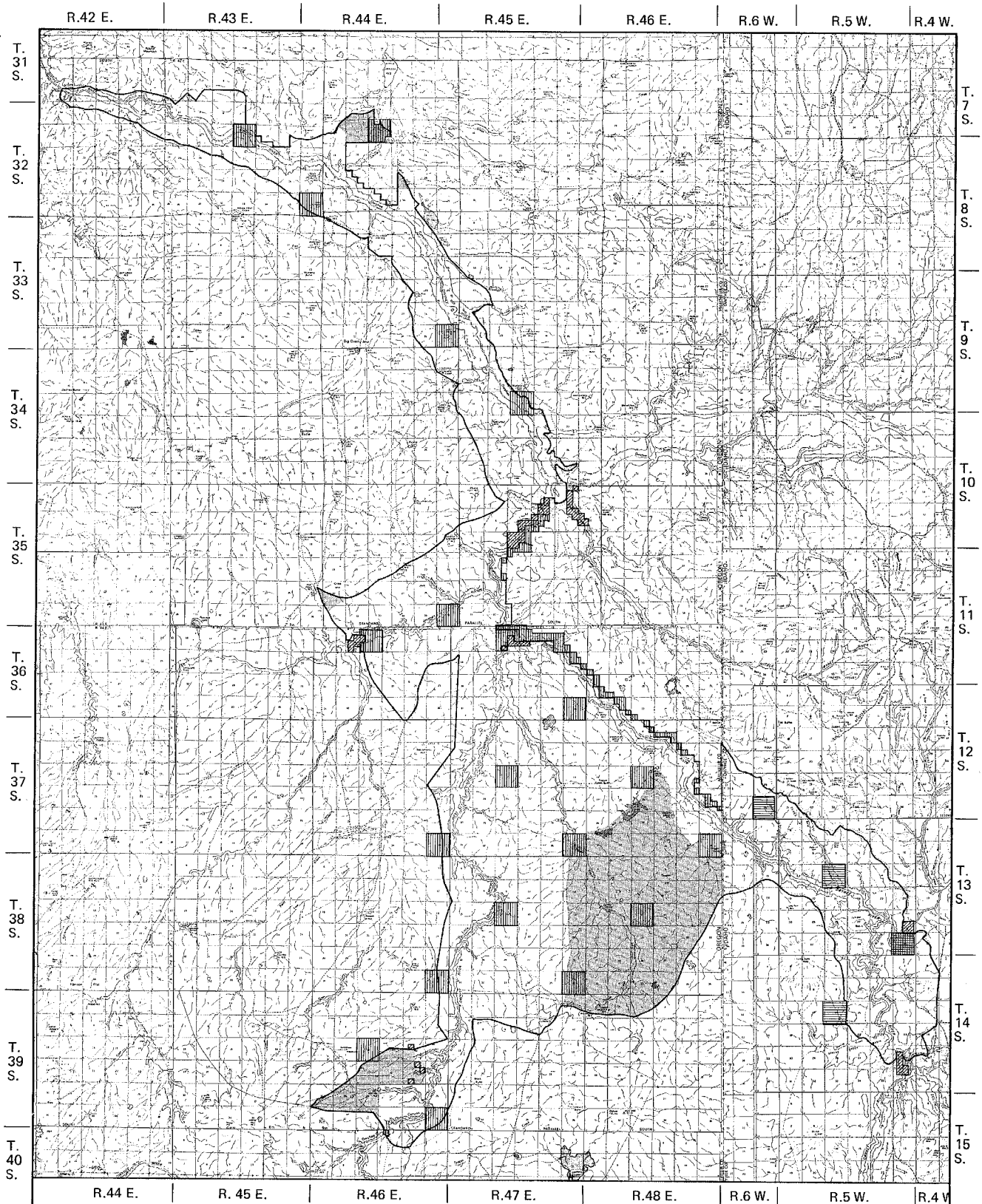
AREA B: Anderson Crossing -- 4,420 acres in the southwest tip of the Owyhee River Canyon WSA contains a plateau with relatively low wilderness values in comparison to its value for livestock forage production. The area contains two miles of water pipeline, two reservoirs and five miles of ways. The pipeline has a road along it and a large water tank which is visible over the entire Area B. There are three 40 acre private inholdings within the area.

AREA C: Antelope Creek -- 1,030 acres of plateau in the west-central portion of the WSA is manageable as wilderness, yet has relatively low wilderness values in a narrow land configuration. Adjusting the boundary would improve the management configuration of the wilderness proposal by placing the boundary along a regularly used ways which sets the area off from the rest of the WSA.

AREA D: Three Forks -- 90 acres of canyon along the east-central boundary of the WSA are contained in a narrow finger of land. Adjusting the boundary would improve the management configuration of the wilderness proposal by eliminating the narrow finger of land.

AREA E: Mud Flat -- 100 acres of plateau in the northern neck of the WSA are also contained in a narrow finger of land. Eliminating the area would improve the management configuration of the wilderness proposal.

AREA F: Soldier Creek -- 980 acres of plateau in the northern neck of the WSA are contained in a somewhat square area isolated from the rest of the WSA by a narrow land neck. The area has one mile of fence and one reservoir proposed for livestock management. The area has lower opportunities for solitude and for primitive recreation than the recommended wilderness. Release of the area for nonwilderness uses would allow for more intensive livestock management and would improve the management configuration of the wilderness.



- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--------------|
| | RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS | | SPLIT ESTATE |
| | RECOMMENDED FOR NONWILDERNESS | | STATE |
| | LAND OUTSIDE WSA RECOMMENDED FOR WILDERNESS | | PRIVATE |

Scale in Miles



ID-16-48B
OWYHEE RIVER CANYON
PROPOSAL

DECEMBER 1988

**Table 1 -- Land Status and Acreage Summary of the Study Area
OWYHEE RIVER CANYON WSA**

Within Wilderness Study Area

| | <u>IDAHO</u> | <u>OREGON</u> | <u>TOTAL</u> |
|--|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| BLM (surface and subsurface) | 34,980 | 180,320 | 215,300 |
| Split Estate (BLM surface only) ¹ | 0 | 10,380 | 10,380 |
| Inholdings (state, private) | 0 | 120 | 120 |
| Total | 34,980 | 190,820 | 225,800 |

Within the Recommended Wilderness Boundary

| | | | |
|---|--------|---------|---------|
| BLM (within WSA) | 34,980 | 143,600 | 178,580 |
| BLM (outside WSA) | 640 | 0 | 640 |
| Split Estate (within WSA) ¹ | 0 | 8,440 | 8,440 |
| Split Estate (outside WSA) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total BLM Land Recommended for Wilderness | 35,620 | 152,040 | 187,660 |
| Inholdings (state, private) ¹ | 0 | 3,560 | 3,560 |
| State land (outside WSA) | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Within the Area Not Recommended for Wilderness

| | | | |
|---|---|--------|--------|
| BLM | 0 | 32,720 | 36,720 |
| Split Estate ¹ | 0 | 1,940 | 1,940 |
| Total BLM Land Not Recommended for Wilderness | 0 | 38,660 | 38,660 |
| Inholdings (state, private) | 0 | 120 | 120 |

¹Appendix I is a detailed description of inholdings and/or split estate tracts included within the area recommended for designation. For purposes of this report, split estate lands are defined as those lands with federal surface and nonfederal subsurface (minerals). Lands that have federal minerals but nonfederal surface are classified by the owner of the surface estate.

3. Criteria Considered in Developing the Wilderness Recommendations

Wilderness Characteristics

A. Naturalness

The Owyhee River Canyon WSA consists of a plateau dissected by 126 miles of deep canyons. Wildlife within the WSA includes California bighorn sheep, mule deer, pronghorn, mountain lion, bobcat, coyote, river otter, raptors, waterfowl and chukars. Trout and largemouth bass are found in the Owyhee River. The WSA is predominantly natural with less than eight percent impacted by human imprints. Most imprints are widely dispersed across the plateau and include 82.5 miles of vehicle tracks (ways), 20.3 miles of cherry-stem roads, fences, four developed springs and 65 small livestock water ponds. In the canyons, imprints are lacking except for some historic ruins. WSA boundary roads can be seen from small areas of the canyon.

B. Solitude

The WSA's outstanding opportunities for solitude are attributed to the isolated, intimate seclusion of canyonlands and the vastness of seemingly undisturbed desert plateau lands and distant mountain ranges.

The meandering character of the canyons and water courses provides excellent topographic screening between visitor groups traveling close together. The depth of the canyons combined with limited viewing distances creates a tremendous sense of seclusion or separation. The length of canyons allows visitor groups to easily find campsites which are out of sight and sound of other groups and to adjust their rates of travel to avoid other groups while floating or hiking.

From high points on the plateau, hundreds to thousands of square miles of open spaces can be seen stretching from Steens Mountain in Oregon to Juniper Mountain in Idaho and southward to the Bull Run Mountains of Nevada.

Solitude is sometimes disrupted by military aircraft. The southwest corner of Idaho is a military operations area (MOA) for training pilots in low elevation, subsonic flight in mostly fighter-bomber type aircraft. Flights occur at elevations as low as 100 feet above the plateau. Daily low elevation flights by B-52 bombers also occur over WSA lands in Oregon. Due to the variation in flight patterns and schedules over this large area, impacts upon the solitude of visitors vary greatly. At times, jets can be seen and/or heard flying all day. Other times, one can travel for several days and not see or hear aircraft.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The scenic natural features and diversity of rugged landforms attract people interested in hunting, backpacking and river running and secondary activities of sightseeing, outdoor photography, wildlife viewing, botanical studies and fishing. River running opportunities are of exceptionally high quality and considered nationally significant. Within the portion of the WSA in Oregon, the Owyhee River and the West Little Owyhee River have been included within the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The miles of canyons, their diversely and severely eroded rock landscapes and their steep slopes create a sense of isolation or solitude, thereby enhancing the primitive recreation experience. Visitors traveling in or near the canyons are constantly aware of the forces of nature.

The challenge and excitement of whitewater rapids add significantly to the boating experience. Hiking the rugged canyons and plateau without the aid of established trails provides a natural and arduous recreational challenge which heightens the primitive experience.

Talus slopes of the canyons encourage travel both near the river and on the plateau. Recreational use of the plateau would concentrate near the canyon rims. These rimrock areas often offer less arduous hiking conditions than those in the canyons and provide opportunities for spectacular vistas of the canyons below. Hiking on the plateau also provides an opportunity to experience vast open spaces.

D. Special Features

The WSA is rich in special features including scenic, scientific, wildlife and cultural values. The special features contribute to the overall quality of the wilderness.

The canyons of the Owyhee River system are of exceptionally high scenic quality. The combination of moving water, colorful sheer cliffs, grass-covered talus slopes and blue sky creates a dramatic stark beauty. In places, reddish brown cliffs drop hundreds of feet to the water. These fractured, blocky rock monoliths are tinted with brilliant green, yellow and orange microflora. Near the base of the cliffs, water sometimes seeps from the fractures to nourish small, lush, clinging, deep green plant communities. The monoliths are frequently topped with a multitude of diversely eroded spires. The sheer rock walls often give way to steep slopes covered with a mosaic of red rock rubble and subdued green and yellow sagebrush and grasses.

Sensitive wildlife species found in the WSA include California bighorn sheep, bobcat, river otter and redband trout. Of particular concern is the population of bighorn sheep, a species dependent upon wildlands habitat for survival. Sensitive plant species include *Pediocactus simpsonii* var. *robustior*, *Hackelia ophiobia* and *Lupinus uncialis*.

The WSA contains both historic and prehistoric archaeological sites. Prehistoric sites include petroglyphs along the shoreline of the Owyhee River below Three Forks, the Dirty Shame Rockshelter at Antelope Creek Canyon, scattered sites along the rim of the canyons, and caves and rock shelters in the canyons. Historical sites include a stone building along the Owyhee River near the Idaho-Oregon state line, a log cabin in the outer canyon of the South Fork Owyhee River and an old military road near Three Forks. Significant historic resources are also located on adjoining or intermixed private properties.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System

A. Assessing the Diversity of Natural Systems and Features as Represented by Ecosystems

Wilderness designation of the Owyhee River Canyon WSA would not add a new ecosystem to the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS), however, it would add a landform not presently represented in the Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem. The landform is dominated by rhyolite uplands cut by deep canyons. This ecosystem is represented by three designated areas with 76,699 acres. There are 35 other BLM study areas in the state under study with this ecosystem. This information is summarized on Table 2.

TABLE 2
Ecosystem Representation

| Bailey-Kuchler Classification | <u>NWPS Areas</u> | | <u>Other BLM Studies</u> | |
|--|-------------------|--------|--------------------------|-----------|
| | areas | acres | areas | acres |
| Dry Domain/Intermountain Sagebrush Province | | | | |
| | | | <u>NATIONWIDE</u> | |
| Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem | 3 | 76,699 | 136 | 4,359,340 |
| | | | <u>IDAHO</u> | |
| Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem | 1 | 12,997 | 35 | 949,916 |
| | | | <u>NEVADA</u> | |
| Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem | 1 | 32,407 | 29 | 1,273,919 |
| | | | <u>CALIFORNIA</u> | |
| Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem | 0 | 0 | 5 | 152,431 |
| | | | <u>OREGON</u> | |
| Sagebrush Steppe Ecosystem | 0 | 0 | 67 | 1,983,074 |

**B. Expanding the Opportunities for Solitude or Primitive Recreation
Within a Day's Driving Time (Five Hours) of Major Population Centers**

The Owyhee River Canyon WSA is within a five-hour drive from Boise, Idaho. Table 3 summarizes the number and acreage of designated areas and other BLM study areas within a five-hour drive of the population center.

Table 3

**Wilderness Opportunities for Residents
of Major Population Centers**

| Population Centers | NWPS Areas | | Other BLM Studies | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| | areas | acres | areas | acres |
| Boise, Idaho | 16 | 4,741,570 | 141 | 5,374,250 |

C. Balancing the Geographic Distribution of Wilderness Areas

The Owyhee River Canyon WSA would contribute to balancing the geographic distribution of areas within the NWPS. Regionally, the WSA would add a desert canyon system not found in designated wilderness and would help to balance opportunities to attain diverse wilderness experiences.

Manageability

Much of the WSA is manageable in the long term to protect wilderness characteristics. Within the 187,660 acres recommended for designation, there are no resource uses which could not be adequately controlled or would affect the manageability of the wilderness. Except for the northern tip of the WSA, which is within five miles of Highway 95, the boundary of the WSA is over 20 miles from a paved highway. Vehicle access to the WSA's boundaries is via some gravel roads but mostly along dirt roads which have received minimal construction and little or no maintenance. Much of the plateau within the WSA is relatively flat, but many areas (particularly those close to the canyons) are strewn with rock rubble and impassable to vehicles. The livestock improvements (small water ponds) are widely scattered over the plateau and their maintenance would have little impact.

Energy and Minerals Resource Values

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the Bureau of Mines (BM) prepared a mineral assessment for 185,740 acres of the WSA in 1987. The assessment found that, in Oregon, two areas have low potential for silver, lead and tin, and one area has low potential for tin. Trace amounts of gold found at Five Bars in Oregon indicate that the Owyhee River gravels have unknown potential for gold. The portion of the WSA in Idaho exhibits no evidence of metallic or nonmetallic mineral resources.

The WSA contains no mines or active mining claims. A prospect for lapidary jasper, chalcedony and common opal is located along the eastern boundary of the WSA. The prospect yields materials mostly of interest to hobbyists.

Oil and gas leasing has occurred on parts of the area but no drilling has taken place. The potential for oil and gas in the Oregon part of the area is unknown. The Idaho portion is considered to have no resource potential for oil and gas.

Warm springs exist in Oregon just south of Three Forks but they were determined to be low potential for geothermal resource development.

Sources of building stone, sand and gravel exist but better supplies are available in more accessible areas.

In 1989, a 60-day public review of the USGS/BM mineral survey report for the WSA was conducted. During the review, comments were submitted which resulted in follow-up consideration by the USGS. Based on this reevaluation, the USGS upgraded the mineral potential rating from low to moderate for undiscovered resources of low-grade, epithermal hot-spring gold and silver deposits in the WSA.

Impacts on Resources

The following comparative impact table summarizes the effects on pertinent resources for all the alternatives considered including designation or nondesignation of the entire area as wilderness.

Table 4
Comparative Summary of the Impacts by Alternative
WSA ID-16-48B/OR-3-195 (OWYHEE RIVER CANYON)

| ISSUE TOPICS | PROPOSED ACTION | NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE (NO WILDERNESS) | CANYONLANDS WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE | WILDLIFE WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE | ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE |
|---------------------------------|--|---|--|--|---|
| Impacts on Wilderness Values | <p>WILDERNESS (187,660 acres) No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 187,530 acres from management actions, slight enhancement in naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on plateau from improved grazing management. Additional localized improvement in naturalness and primitive recreation due to higher visual quality standards during rangeland facility maintenance or reconstruction and closure of 62 miles of roads/ways to recreation use. Localized reductions in naturalness due to trampling of river campsite vegetation and the construction of new reservoir/fences (130 acres). Vehicle access for rangeland facility maintenance prevents rehabilitation of all roads closed to recreation use. Recreation use per annum to reach 7,850 user days for boating, 800 user days for backpacking and 660 user days for other activities. This use not to affect solitude/primitive recreation opportunities overall nor naturalness away from river shoreline.</p> <p>NONWILDERNESS (38,600 acres) No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 36,575 acres. Localized reduction in naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on 185 acres from construction of new reservoir/fences, on 1,900 acres from drill seeding land treatments and oil/gas exploration activities, and on an additional 1,300 acres from oil/gas activities only (short term). Solitude opportunities also reduced by oil/gas exploration activities (short term). Some reduction in naturalness of plateau because</p> | <p>NONWILDERNESS (225,680 acres) No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 212,465 acres from management actions. Loss of naturalness and primitive recreation on 2,900 acres from drill seeding land treatments and oil/gas exploration activities. Short-term loss of naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on an additional 1,300 acres from oil/gas exploration activities only. Localized reduction in naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on 315 acres due to reservoir/fence construction. Mining/geothermal activities cause a loss of naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on 10,000 acres. Solitude opportunities also reduced by oil/gas exploration and mining/geothermal activities. Recreation use per annum in 20 years to reach 7,850 user days for boating, 550 user days for backpacking and 1,230 user days for other activities. This level of use not to affect naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities except for localized campsite trampling along river. Slight reduction in naturalness of plateau because of increased grazing.</p> | <p>WILDERNESS (47,540 acres) No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 47,540 acres from management actions. Localized reduction in naturalness due to trampling of river campsites by recreation users. Recreation use per annum to reach 7,850 user days for boating and 550 user days for backpacking. Other uses to reach 515 user days. This use not to affect solitude/primitive recreation opportunities. Localized improvement in naturalness by closure of 4 miles of roads to recreation use.</p> <p>NONWILDERNESS (178,140 acres) No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 167,125 acres. Localized reduction in naturalness and primitive recreation on 315 acres from construction of new reservoirs/fences, on 7,800 acres from mining activity, on 1,300 acres from oil/gas exploration and seeding activities. Recreation use to reach 1,000 user days per annum in 20 years. This use not to affect naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities. Slight reduction in naturalness of plateau because of increased grazing.</p> | <p>WILDERNESS (148,990 acres) No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 148,990 acres from management actions. Slight enhancement in naturalness and primitive recreation on plateau from improved grazing management. Additional localized improvement in naturalness and primitive recreation due to higher visual quality standards during rangeland facility maintenance or reconstruction and the closure of 40 miles of roads/ways to recreation use. Localized reduction in naturalness due to trampling of river campsite vegetation and the construction of new reservoirs/fences (130 acres). Vehicle access to rangeland facilities for maintenance prevents rehabilitation of all roads closed to recreation use. Recreation use per annum to reach 7,850 user days for boating and 800 user days for backpacking in 20 years. This use not to affect solitude or primitive recreation. Other recreation uses (1,000 user days) also not to affect these opportunities.</p> <p>NONWILDERNESS (77,330 acres) No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 72,705 acres. Localized reduction in naturalness and primitive recreation opportunities on 185 acres from construction of new reservoirs/fences, on 2,500 acres from drill seeding land treatments and oil/gas exploration activities, and on an additional 1,300 acres from oil/gas activities only (short term). Solitude opportunities also lost by oil/gas exploration activities (short term). Some reduction in naturalness of plateau because of increased grazing.</p> | <p>WILDERNESS (226,320 acres) No significant change in naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities on 224,210 acres from management actions. Slight enhancement in naturalness and primitive recreation on plateau from improved grazing management. Localized improvement in naturalness and primitive recreation due to higher visual quality standards during rangeland facility maintenance or reconstruction and closure of 103 miles of roads/ways to recreation use. Localized reduction in naturalness due to trampling of river campsite vegetation and the construction of new reservoirs/fences (190 acres). Vehicle access for rangeland facilities maintenance prevents rehabilitation of all roads/ways closed to recreation use. In 20 years, recreation use per annum to reach 7,850 user days for boating, 800 user days for backpacking and 1,095 user days for other uses. This use not to affect solitude or primitive recreation opportunities</p> |

(Continued next page)

| ISSUE TOPICS | PROPOSED ACTION | NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE (NO WILDERNESS) | CANYONLANDS WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE | WILDLIFE WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE | ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE |
|---|---|--|--|--|---|
| Impacts on Wilderness Values (continued) (Owyhee River Canyon WSA) | of increased forage utilization (more grazed appearances). Recreation use of 253 user days per annum in 20 years not to affect naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities. | | | Recreation use of 425 user days per annum in 20 years not to affect naturalness or solitude/primitive recreation opportunities. | |
| Impacts on the Condition and Amount of Native Vegetation | <p>WILDERNESS Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 116,022 acres and maintained in good condition on 71,630 acres from grazing practices. Reservoir construction to displace 8 acres of native vegetation.</p> <p>NONWILDERNESS Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 33,450 acres and retained in good condition on 4,250 acres. Native plants displaced by seeding on 950 acres. Reservoir construction to displace 10 acres of native vegetation. Temporary loss of vegetation from oil/gas exploration activities on 10 acres.</p> | <p>NONWILDERNESS Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 148,304 acres and retained in good condition on 75,880 acres by grazing practices. Native plants displaced on 1,450 acres by seeding. Reservoir construction to displace 18 acres of native vegetation. Mining and geothermal exploration activities would displace vegetation temporarily on 28 acres. Oil/gas exploration activities to temporarily displace additional 10 acres of vegetation.</p> | <p>WILDERNESS Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 3,960 acres and retained in good condition on 43,580 acres by grazing practices.</p> <p>NONWILDERNESS Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 144,350 acres and retained in good condition on 32,300 acres by grazing practices. Native plants displaced on 1,450 acres by seeding. Vegetation displaced on 18 acres by reservoir construction and on 14 acres by mining activity.</p> | <p>WILDERNESS Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 77,660 acres and retained in good condition on 71,330 acres by grazing practices.</p> <p>NONWILDERNESS Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 71,518 acres and retained in good condition on 4,550 acres by grazing practices. Native plants displaced by seeding on 1,250 acres. Vegetation displaced on 10 acres by reservoir construction and on 2 acres by mining activity. Temporary displacement of vegetation on 10 acres by oil/gas exploration activity.</p> | <p>WILDERNESS Ecological condition of native plant communities improved on 150,440 acres and retained in good condition on 75,880 acres by grazing practice.</p> |
| Impacts on Selected Wildlife Populations (Bighorn sheep, mule deer, antelope and sage grouse) | <p>WILDERNESS Increased recreation use to have minimal impact to wildlife populations. Only localized, temporary wildlife displacement expected during periods of recreation activity. Road/way closures would reduce potential for wildlife disturbance from recreational vehicle use. Increased forage availability and enhanced overall habitat condition resulting from improved grazing practices, reservoir construction/maintenance and seeding on plateau would increase wildlife populations.</p> <p>NONWILDERNESS However, increased livestock numbers would compete with and reduce potential wildlife populations on unsuitable lands. Oil/gas exploration would cause only temporary displacement of wildlife populations on unsuitable lands.</p> | <p>NONWILDERNESS Increased recreation use to have minimal impact to wildlife populations. Only localized temporary wildlife displacement expected during periods of recreation activity. Increased forage availability and enhanced overall habitat condition resulting from improved grazing practices. Reservoir construction/maintenance and seeding on plateau would increase wildlife populations. However, increased livestock numbers would compete with and reduce potential wildlife populations. Oil/gas and mineral exploration would cause only temporary displacement of wildlife populations.</p> | <p>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Impacts the same as those of the No Action Alternative.</p> | <p>WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Impacts the same as those of the Proposed Action.</p> | <p>WILDERNESS Increased recreation use to have minimal impact to wildlife populations. Only localized temporary wildlife displacement expected during periods of recreation activity. Road/way closures would reduce potential for wildlife disturbance from recreational vehicle use. Increased forage availability and enhanced overall habitat condition resulting from improved grazing practices. Reservoir construction/maintenance would increase wildlife populations.</p> |

| ISSUE TOPICS | PROPOSED ACTION | NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE (NO WILDERNESS) | CANYONLANDS WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE | WILDLIFE WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE | ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE |
|--|--|---|---|--|---|
| Impacts on Motorized Semi-Primitive Recreation Use (Owyhee River Canyon WSA) | WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS 62 miles of interior roads/ways closed to recreational vehicle use within wilderness. Semi-primitive motorized recreation use to reach 913 user days annually in 20 years for hunting, sightseeing, rockhounding or camping in association with WSA boundary roads. Nonsuitable lands left open for vehicle access. | NONWILDERNESS All roads/ways to remain open for semi-primitive motorized recreation use. Use to reach 1,230 user days annually in 20 years for hunting, sightseeing, rockhounding or camping. | WILDERNESS 4 miles of roads/ways within canyon wilderness closed to semi-primitive motorized recreation use. Annual use in 20 years to reach 1,515 user days for hunting, sightseeing, rockhounding or camping along plateau roads/ways. | WILDERNESS 40 miles of interior roads/ways closed to recreational vehicle use within wilderness. Use to reach 1,425 user days per annum in 20 years for hunting, sightseeing, rockhounding or camping in association with WSA boundary roads. NONWILDERNESS Nonsuitable lands left open for vehicle access. | WILDERNESS 103 miles of interior roads/ways closed to recreational vehicle use within wilderness. Semi-primitive motorized recreation use associated with WSA boundary roads to reach 1,095 user days annually in 20 years for hunting, sightseeing, rockhounding or camping. |
| Impacts on Livestock Use | WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Annual livestock use to increase from 12,565 AUMs to 12,665 AUMs within 20 years on WSA lands. 9 reservoirs and 9 miles of fence will be built within wilderness and nonwilderness to help distribute livestock use. | NONWILDERNESS Annual livestock use to increase from 12,565 AUMs to 22,535 AUMs within 20 years on WSA lands. 9 reservoirs and 9 miles of fence will be built to help distribute livestock use. | WILDERNESS Annual livestock use to increase from 12,565 AUMs to 19,955 AUMs within 20 years on WSA lands. NONWILDERNESS 9 reservoirs and 9 miles of fence will be built within nonwilderness to help distribute livestock use. | WILDERNESS Annual livestock use to increase from 12,565 AUMs to 12,665 AUMs within 20 years on WSA lands. NONWILDERNESS 9 reservoirs and 9 miles of fence will be built within wilderness and nonwilderness to help distribute livestock use. | WILDERNESS Annual livestock use to remain at 12,565 AUMs over next 20 years on WSA lands. 4 reservoirs and 9 miles of fence to be built to help distribute livestock use. |
| Impacts on Soil Erosion | WILDERNESS Road/way closures to reduce associated soil erosion by 94 tons per year within wilderness. NONWILDERNESS Seeding on 1,900 nonwilderness acres to reduce soil erosion by 5-15%. Oil/gas exploration to produce short-term erosion problems on 10 acres. Projected small increase in livestock use combined with improved grazing practices to result in no measurable change in soil erosion rates overall. | NONWILDERNESS Seeding on 2,900 acres to reduce erosion rate on affected lands by 5-15%. Oil/gas and mineral/geothermal exploration activities to produce short-term erosion problems on 38 acres. Projected large increase in livestock use to cause 10-20% increase in soil erosion on WSA lands overall despite improved grazing practices. | WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Impacts the same as the No Action Alternative. | WILDERNESS Road/way closures within wilderness to reduce associated soil erosion by 76 tons per year. Seeding on 2,500 acres to reduce erosion rate by 5-15%. Oil/gas and mineral exploration activity to produce short-term erosion problems on 12 acres. NONWILDERNESS Projected large increase in livestock use to cause 10-20% increase in soil erosion on nonsuitable lands. | WILDERNESS Road/way closure to reduce associated soil erosion by 237 tons per year. Improved grazing practices combined with no increase in livestock use levels to reduce soil erosion by 5% on plateau overall. |
| Impacts on Water Quality | WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Suspended sediment loads in WSA tributary streams remain about the same. Owyhee River and West Little Owyhee sediment loads not measurably affected. | NONWILDERNESS Suspended sediment loads in WSA tributary streams increased by 10-20%. Owyhee River and West Little Owyhee sediment loads not measurably affected. Remote possibility of toxic materials in West Little Owyhee from mining activity. | WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Impacts the same as the No Action Alternative. | WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Impacts the same as the No Action Alternative except less possibility of toxic materials in West Little Owyhee. | WILDERNESS Suspended sediment loads in WSA tributary streams reduced by 5%. Owyhee River and West Little Owyhee sediment loads not measurably affected. |

| ISSUE TOPICS | PROPOSED ACTION | NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE (NO WILDERNESS) | CANYONLANDS WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE | WILDLIFE WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE | ALL WILDERNESS ALTERNATIVE |
|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| Impacts on Local Income and Jobs (Owyhee River Canyon WSA) | WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Income and employment data by individual WSA is not available. For Owyhee Canyonlands WSA complex as a whole, the Proposed Action would contribute to a .3% increase in income and a .3% increase in employment over the next 20 years from livestock and recreational use of the WSAs in the 3-county area (Owyhee, Malheur and Elko Counties). | NONWILDERNESS Both income and employment from WSA complex up .4% in 20 years. | WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Both income and employment from WSA complex up .4% in 20 years. | WILDERNESS/ NONWILDERNESS Both income and employment from WSA complex up .3% in 20 years. | WILDERNESS From WSA complex, income up .2% and employment up .3%. |

Local Social and Economic Considerations

Designation of 187,660 acres as wilderness would have no significant social or economic impacts on the local communities of Owyhee and Malheur Counties. The impact to local income and jobs was an issue analyzed in the study of the Owyhee River Canyon WSA.

Summary of WSA-Specific Public Comments

Public involvement has occurred throughout the wilderness review process. Certain comments received during the inventory process were considered in developing issues and various management alternatives. During the wilderness inventory for the Owyhee River Canyon roadless unit, 23 public comments supported the establishment of a WSA and nine opposed it. Supportive comments stated the area possessed the minimum characteristics necessary (size, naturalness, solitude and primitive recreation opportunities) to be considered for wilderness as well as supplemental values such as wildlife, scenic, vegetation and cultural resources. Those opposed to the WSA felt that the area did not have significant wilderness characteristics and that "multiple use" would be better served if the area was released from further wilderness review.

During the public review of the Owyhee and Bruneau Management Framework Plans, 51 out of 55 comments supported wilderness designation for the Owyhee Canyonlands WSA complex with no specific comments on the Owyhee River Canyon WSA. During public review on the Southern Malheur Management Framework Plan, 94 comments supported wilderness while nine opposed wilderness for WSA OR-3-195. Comments in support of wilderness stressed the need for long-term protection of the high quality wilderness characteristics and special features of both the canyons and the plateau. Comments opposed to the wilderness designation addressed a perception that "multiple use" would provide greater public benefit, that wilderness was not multiple use, and that public benefits could be optimized more effectively through a wild river designation in the Owyhee River Canyon and with the further development of livestock and potential mineral/energy resources on the plateau and in the river's tributary canyons.

During the public comment period on the Draft Owyhee Canyonlands Wilderness EIS, 448 written or oral comments supported all WSAs or portions of all WSAs in the Owyhee Canyonlands complex as wilderness, 46 comments opposed any wilderness in the WSA complex and 23 comments had no position. Those in support of wilderness for the Owyhee River Canyon WSA were mostly in favor of designating the entire WSA as wilderness. The public was particularly concerned with BLM's recommendation to eliminate the Toppin Creek area (Area A), Anderson Crossing area (Area B) and Antelope Creek area (Area C) from wilderness designation. Support for the entire WSA as wilderness was based upon a desire to see wildlife, vegetation and other natural resources protected. Opposition to any of the WSA becoming wilderness was based upon a desire for improved livestock management opportunities, the need for continued use of the area for motorized recreation and the need to have further opportunities for the exploration and possible development of mineral and energy resources.

Government agency comments on the EIS took the following positions: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service supported wilderness designation; the Bonneville Power Administration did not object to wilderness designation in the Owyhee Canyonlands as long as adequate consideration was given to utility corridors; the U.S. Air Force supported wilderness designation if no significant restrictions were placed on military overflights; the Bureau of Reclamation had no objection to wilderness; the Idaho Department of Fish and Game supported the wilderness recommendation; the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife supported wilderness designation of only the canyons; the Idaho Air National Guard opposed wilderness; the Oregon Parks and Recreation Division stated that wilderness designation is

compatible with the Owyhee River State Scenic Waterway; the Oregon Department of Agriculture did not oppose wilderness as long as stockmen were allowed to continue managing livestock in an efficient manner; and the local governments of Owyhee and Malheur Counties opposed wilderness but supported national wild river designation.

Subsequent to the May 31, 1984, conclusion of the public comment period for the Draft Owyhee Canyonlands Wilderness EIS, but prior to the completion of the Final EIS, 78 written comments were received. One of the comments opposed any wilderness designation in the WSA complex, one took no position and 76 supported wilderness designation. Of the wilderness advocates, 61 supported designating the entire Owyhee River Canyon WSA as wilderness. Most of this wilderness support was in response to a "flyer" sent out by the Committee for Idaho's High Desert and to an "alert" in the Sierra Club magazine.

APPENDIX I -- OWYHEE RIVER CANYON WSA
Estimated Costs of Acquisition of Nonfederal Holdings
Within Areas Recommended for Designation(1)

| | | | Type of Ownership by Estate | Type of Ownership by Estate | | | Estimated Cost of Acquisition | Estimated Cost of Acquisition |
|--|------------------------------------|------------------------------|--|--|--|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| Legal Description | Total Acreage | Number of Owners | Surface Estate | Subsurface Estate | Presently Proposed for Acquisition | Preferred Method of Acquisition | Land Costs (in \$) | Processing Costs (in \$) |
| STATE LANDS | | | | | | | | |
| T. 35 S., R. 45 E., Sec. 9 SE1/4SE1/4 Sec. 10 SE1/4NW1/4, N1/2SW1/4NE1/4, W1/2SW1/4, N1/2NE1/4SW1/4 Sec. 16 SE1/4, E1/2NE1/4, S1/2SW1/4 Sec. 20 NE1/4NE1/4, SE1/4SE1/4 | 40 160 320 80 | 1 1 1 1 | State State State State | State State State State | Yes Yes Yes Yes | Exchange Exchange Exchange Exchange | < | |

| | | | Type of Ownership by Estate | Type of Ownership by Estate | | | Estimated Cost of Acquisition | Estimated Cost of Acquisition |
|---|---------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Legal Description | Total Acreage | Number of Owners | Surface Estate | Subsurface Estate | Presently Proposed for Acquisition | Preferred Method of Acquisition | Land Costs (in \$) | Processing Costs (in \$) |
| OWYHEE RIVER CANYON WSA (CONTINUED) | | | | | | | | |
| STATE LANDS(cont) | | | | | | | | |
| T. 37 S., R. 48 E. Sec. 3 | | | | | | | | |
| N1/2SE1/4, SE1/4SE1/4, N1/2SW1/4 | 200 | 1 | State | State | Yes | Exchange | | 2,000 |
| Sec. 4 | | | | | | | | |
| SE1/4NE1/4, NW1/4NE1/4 | 80 | 1 | State | State | Yes | Exchange | | 800 |
| Sec. 11 | | | | | | | | |
| NW1/4NW1/4, SE1/4NW1/4 | 80 | 1 | State | State | Yes | Exchange | | 800 |
| Sec. 14 | | | | | | | | |
| NE1/4SE1/4 | 40 | 1 | State | State | Yes | Exchange | | 400 |
| Sec. 23 | | | | | | | | |
| NE1/4NE1/4 | 40 | 1 | State | State | Yes | Exchange | | 400 |
| Sec. 24 | | | | | | | | |
| SE1/4NW1/4, NW1/4SW1/4, NW1/4SE1/4, SE1/4SE1/4 | 160 | 1 | State | State | Yes | Exchange | | 1,600 |
| SPLIT ESTATE | | | | | | | | |
| T. 32 S., R. 43 E. | | | | | | | | |
| Sec. 16 | 640 | 2 | Federal | State | Yes | Exchange | | 6,400 |
| Sec. 36 | 640(2) | 2 | Federal | State | Yes | Exchange | | 6,400 |
| T. 33 S., R. 44 E. | | | | | | | | |
| Sec. 36 | 640 | 2 | Federal | State | Yes | Exchange | | 6,400 |
| T. 34 S., R. 45 E. | | | | | | | | |
| Sec. 16 | 640(2) | 2 | Federal | State | Yes | Exchange | | 6,400 |
| T. 35 S., R. 44 E. | | | | | | | | |
| Sec. 36 | 640 | 2 | Federal | State | Yes | Exchange | | 6,400 |
| T. 36 S., R. 46 E. | | | | | | | | |
| Sec. 16 | 600(2) | 2 | Federal | State | Yes | Exchange | | 6,400 |
| T. 36 S., R. 47 E. | | | | | | | | |
| Sec. 16 | 280 | 2 | Federal | State | Yes | Exchange | | 2,800 |
| Sec. 36 | 640 | 2 | Federal | State | Yes | Exchange | | 6,400 |
| T. 37 S., R. 47 E. | | | | | | | | |
| Sec. 16 | 640 | 2 | Federal | State | Yes | Exchange | | 6,400 |
| Sec. 36 | 640(2) | 2 | Federal | State | Yes | Exchange | | 6,400 |
| T. 37 S. , R. 46 E. | | | | | | | | |
| Sec. 36 | 640(2) | 2 | Federal | State | Yes | Exchange | | 6,400 |
| T. 37 S., R. 48 E. | | | | | | | | |
| Sec. 16 | 640(2) | 2 | Federal | State | Yes | Exchange | | 6,400 |
| Sec. 36 | 640 | 2 | Federal | State | Yes | Exchange | | 6,400 |
| T. 38 S., R. 47 E. | | | | | | | | |
| Sec. 16 | 640 | 2 | Federal | State | Yes | Exchange | | 6,400 |
| Sec. 36 | 640(2) | 2 | Federal | State | Yes | Exchange | | 6,400 |

| Legal Description | Total Acreage | Number of Owners | Type of Ownership by Estate | | Presently Proposed for Acquisition | Preferred Method of Acquisition | Estimated Cost of Acquisition | Estimated Cost of Acquisition |
|--|---------------|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | | | Surface Estate | Subsurface Estate | | | Land Costs (in \$) | Processing Costs (in \$) |
| OWYHEE RIVER CANYON WSA (CONTINUED) | | | | | | | | |
| SPLIT ESTATE | | | | | | | | |
| (Cont) | | | | | | | | |
| T. 38 S., R. 46 E. Sec. 36 | 640(2) | 2 | Federal | State | Yes | Exchange | | 6,400 |
| T. 39 S., R. 46 E. Sec. 36 | 640(2) | 2 | Federal | State | Yes | Exchange | | 6,400 |
| PRIVATE LAND | | | | | | | | |
| T. 35 S., R. 45 E. Sec. 3 W1/2SE1/4, SE1/4SW1/4 | 120 | 1 | Private | Private | Yes | ? | 80,000 | 1,200 |
| Sec. 9 N1/2SE1/4, SW1/4SE1/4 | 120 | 1 | Private | Private | Yes | ? | 80,000 | 1,200 |
| Sec. 10 NW1/4NE1/4, NE1/4NW1/4, SW1/4NW1/4 | 120 | 1 | Private | Private | Yes | ? | 80,000 | 1,200 |
| Sec. 16 W1/2NE1/4, NW1/4, N1/4SW1/4 | 320 | 1 | Private | Private | Yes | ? | 240,000 | 3,200 |
| T. 36 S., R. 47 E. Sec. 15 N1/2SW1/4 | 80 | 1 | Private | Private | Yes | ? | 80,000 | 800 |
| Sec. 16 SW1/4NE1/4, N1/2SE1/4, SE1/4SW1/4 | 160 | 2 | Private | Private | Yes | ? | 160,000 | 1,600 |

(1)The estimated costs listed in this appendix in no way represent a formal appraised value of the land or mineral estate but are rough estimates based on sales or exchanges of lands or mineral estates with similar characteristics to those included in the WSA. The estimates are for purposes of establishing a range of potential costs to the government of acquiring nonfederal holdings and in no way represent an offer to purchase or exchange at the cost estimate included in this appendix.

(2)Portion of this acreage within area recommended for designation. Acquisition through exchange would necessitate acquisition of entire parcel.